



## International Student Migration: A Case Study of Punjab

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### ABSTRACT

This work is on International Student Mobility (ISM) in Higher Education, and it contributes to the growing interest in ISM among researchers. The fact that in the 1950s, the global number of students studying abroad was believed to be around 200 000, and by 2012, it had risen to more than 2 million, at least in absolute terms, justifies this interest. The report is based on the findings of preliminary research into the field, and it identifies information gaps, conceptual inconsistencies, and other obstacles related with ISM research. The presentation's major goal is to create academic knowledge of new ideas related to the topic, to provide new, successful techniques to investigating ISM, and to speculate on the types of implications that ISM research discoveries might have for the academic community.

Keywords: International Student Mobility, Higher Education, exploratory research;

### Introduction

Here there is little doubt that International Student Mobility is transforming the global HE scene, with a rising number of students attending HE institutions overseas. However, different organizations, institutions, and individuals have diverse perspectives on student mobility, complicating the job of academics and policymakers. For example, unless the specific type of mobility under consideration is properly and explicitly described, it is difficult to assess the scope, relevance, and quality of research. Furthermore, if research lacks a precise definition of the sort of mobility being studied, policymakers who are informed by it are likely to draw incorrect generalizations.

Different interpretations of the word, on the other hand, encourage the exchange of ideas and discussion about what ISM actually involves. Taking use of this opportunity, one of the goals of this work is to identify knowledge gaps, conceptual inconsistencies, and other research issues related to ISM. The purpose of this study is not to present an entire list of words or research methodologies related to ISM; rather, it is to show the breadth and diversity of definitions and concepts available. Other objectives include disseminating new, successful approaches to ISM research and speculating on the kind of ramifications that ISM research discoveries might have for the academic community.

While supranational organisations are currently focused on student mobility, the executive definition, even in official publications, is somewhat vague. International Student Mobility, for example, is defined by the European Parliament and Council (2006) as "a period of learning abroad (formal and non-formal), or mobility undertaken by individual young people or adults for the purposes of formal and non-formal learning, as well as for their personal and professional development". This concept appears broad for all mobile individuals engaging in any kind of learning process and not unique to students because one does not have to be a student to participate in nonformal learning or personal development. Students, on the other hand, are distinct from informal learners in that they pursue verified and recognised postsecondary education. Improvements have, of course, been made over time and in the The European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2009) refer to academic mobility as "a study or training period abroad". Most researchers, however, believe that such a description is excessively broad.

Geographic mobility, or the ability to move from one area to another, is the most visible aspect of mobility and can be separated into intra- and international mobility. Intra-national mobility occurs within a country, whereas international mobility, also known as transnational mobility, occurs across national borders. This research focuses solely on student mobility, which is a subset of academic mobility, rather than individual geographic mobility. Students' international academic mobility might be virtual (computer-mediated, long-distance) or physical (physical mobility) (also called spatial or geographical). In terms of socio-politics, ISM might be inward (inside a country) or outward (within a region) (out of a country). Of course, all of these mobility processes are educational, but they typically include different experiences, such as virtual and physical academic mobility, and provide various consequences.

ISM is complicated by serious measurement challenges and tends to deal with student flows in terms of numbers (Kelo et al., 2006). Many publications from international organisations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the European Commission (Education and Training Division) give the impression that data on international student mobility is plentiful. However, this notion is false because the statistics provided by particular countries for the purposes of collecting by these supranational bodies report on international students, who are measured by their foreign nationality. However, according to research (Findlay and King, 2012), international, foreign, abroad, mobile, and sojourner students are not the same category of students, despite certain similarities. Such inconsistencies obstruct shared interpretations of statistical data, impair the comparability of conclusions, and reduce the

trustworthiness of ISM as a research topic. Furthermore, despite the established lists of characteristics identifying student flows, much of the study is decontextualized. It is difficult to pinpoint groups of students within post-secondary education that researchers take into account unless they are specified: university students, college students, further education students, other groups of students, or all tertiary level students, for example, unless they are specified.

However, it must be admitted that more recent publications demonstrate a greater understanding of the debate. The disparity in how the topic of student mobility is covered in the European Commission's Key Data on Education in Europe is one of many examples. The 2007 version merely covers overall student mobility without going into detail about who the mobile students are. The Key Data series published in 2012 distinguishes between mobility assisted by exchange programmes and degree mobility. This shift implies that "student mobility" has evolved into a "umbrella phrase" that encompasses a number of linked activities that result in schooling in a foreign country in recent years.

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## Objectives

1. To probe the factors that determine the choice of course, educational institution and the destination country.
2. To analyse the sources of funding for studying abroad.

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## Review of Literature

Analyses of the current literature reveal that ISM is examined in a variety of academic domains, making it impossible to establish a single agreed-upon definition. The majority of ISM research is focused on the following topics: Migration studies, education, and higher education sociology. Researchers appear to re-negotiate mobility based not only on their professional ties, but also on their scientific fields with certain ontological and epistemological traditions, by utilising this flexibility. Only from the perspective of Migration Studies and Education, this paper covers the range and variety of conceptual platforms and research techniques that enable more or less successful strategies for researching ISM.

The majority of research studies on ISM are concentrated in the topic of Migration Studies, according to a thorough evaluation of the literature (Wells, 2012). From the perspective of Migration Studies, the goal of ISM study is to comprehend the principles of student movements and examine the influences that direct the flows, also known as push and pull factors. The authors point out that strong pull factors such as language and cultural security, social and familial ties, lower cost of living, and so on may be powerful enough to keep certain students at home. At the same time, students who are considering or have already begun studying abroad are quite likely to be influenced by a variety of push factors while in host countries, but how they respond to these influences is very unique and nuanced.

Furthermore, according to King (2002), Movement Studies distinguishes between short-term, long-term, and permanent migration patterns, with mobile students being classified as short-term migrants. This technique may be appropriate for students participating in exchange programmes who are studying abroad for a limited time, but students who travel independently and on their own time, since they may be short-term, long-term, or even permanent migrants, require a more extensive research. Permanent migrants go through different procedures than short-term migrants, according to King, despite the fact that the temporal aspects are not defined. As a result, categorizing all mobile students as short-term migrants skews research results. 'Shuttle' migration, which represents more or less frequent, recurring travel to one or more other nations, is an interesting alternative suggested by King.

It's also common to equate ISM with human capital and its cross-national dispersion. Kehm and Teichler, 2007; (OECD Publishing, 2013). Despite the fact that the impact of human capital theory on ISM is well documented, it also introduces some of the theory's fundamental problems into the area. Many students who study abroad are thought to choose to stay and work in the country where they received their education (Dreher, 2013). Mobile students are viewed as highly skilled migrants and human capital bearers in their host nations in this situation.

This concept, however, has a number of flaws. To begin with, it's unclear whether the mobile students are already highly skilled migrants when they arrive in the host nation or if they become highly skilled as a result of their studies there. Second, this concept is based on the premise that the theory of human capital applies to education overseas in the same way that it does at home, which is incorrect, according to Hadler (2006) and others. This concept, however, has a number of flaws. To begin with, it's unclear whether the mobile students are already highly skilled migrants when they arrive in the host nation or if they become highly skilled as a result of their studies there. Second, this concept is based on the premise that the theory of human capital applies to education overseas in the same way that it does at home, which is incorrect, according to Hadler (2006) and others. In light of these concerns, the notion of human capital by itself is ineffective for studying student mobility.

In order to connect student mobility to human capital theory, researchers must look at the phenomena of human capital flight, sometimes known as 'brain drain.' Despite common opinion, there is no scientific evidence that a significant number of out-going mobile students causes countries to lose their collective human capital. The assumption that mobile students behave like highly competent permanent migrants who choose to stay in their host nations is believed to have given rise to such an opinion. The difference between highly-skilled permanent migrants and mobile students is that migrants (with a few exceptions) are more likely to have been educated in their home countries; many of them do not intend to return to their home countries; and their relocation is motivated by work rather than education. During their education, students, on the other hand, may be able to enhance their human capital in the host country. Furthermore, even if they do not immediately return home, there are no 'laws' as to how long an individual can work overseas before their home nation considers them to be contributing to 'brain drain.' These distinctions highlight the fact that, while there may be a link between highly skilled migrants and 'brain drain,' there is no convincing evidence that mobile students contribute to 'brain outflow.'

However, ISM's main criticism of the push and pull forces analysis as a study framework is that it focuses on external (macro) pressures that affect mobile students while ignoring human motives. One of the authors, Hadler (2006), warns that the essence of mobility experience is found in the interaction of "macro-level factors relating to overall movements... and particular, micro-level explanations that highlight personal circumstances and

qualities". Hadler (2006) recommends an actor-oriented approach to ISM, citing Esser (1988), which stresses individual perceptions as stronger motivators and identifies external factors solely in terms of their effect on an individual. De Haas (2009), for example, observes that human agency is typically overlooked in ISM research, which is historically focused on data, and explains those push and pull forces, may guide and define student flows but do not generate them. The dispute over the relative relevance of macro and micro levels in affecting student mobility is paralleled in the dichotomy of 'agency' vs. 'structure' in Sociology of Higher Education.

However, judgments made by 'agents' on an individual level are the most difficult to analyse since in this situation, research must consider the choices and motivations of mobile students, which frequently deal with students' past views, present perceptions, and future desires. These processes are challenging to record and research since they are constantly changing and subject to numerous interpretations. According to Guth (2008), investigations of individual degrees of mobility are often descriptive and lack a distinct goal.

Locating student mobility research inside the student-populated transnational social fields is one viable lens for challenging the view toward students as a passive population. Transnational social fields, according to Gargano (2009), are venues where ideas, practises, and social networks can be structured, exchanged, and modified through interlocking networks of international students. The lack of robust ideas that can represent international student experiences and identity reconstructions is to fault for homogenizing and generalizing international student discussions when enormous dimensions of variation exist,' she says.

She claims that recognising mobile students as members of their social networks allows them to be placed not just in physical and institutional contexts, but also in the social structure and as members of their transnational community. This method allows her to depict not only the phenomenon of relocation, but also the dynamics of the members' continually re-negotiated relationships. Wells (2012) saw the promise of the concept and backed it up with empirical research and examples of feasible approaches for situating students' experiences within their transnational social networks, rather than just inside their geographical locales.

Tracing the origins of the concept of transnational spaces, Collins (2008) stated that transnational spaces exist between students' home countries and countries of education. According to Collins, mobility is a transnational process, and the 'bridge' that connects transnational spaces is rooted in 'the economic activities of education agents and... the interpersonal networks that assist in the movement and settlement of international students, as well as the role that former international students play in promoting overseas study' (p. 399). Thus, Collins adds to the discussion over the importance of macro and micro variables on mobility decisions and/or expands on the argument about the prevalence of agency or structure.

Participation in transnational social spheres shows a shift in student behaviour, which might be attributed to the significant rise in mobile students coming to England in recent decades. Earlier research in the 1990s (for example, see Berry, 1997) demonstrated that international students congregated based on their nationality and linguistic proficiency; however, participants in Wells' (2012) research demonstrated that they made connections with people based on convenience, gender, and commonality of interest (e.g. subject area), regardless of country of origin, nationality, or native language. This discovery also helps to study on English as the world's lingua franca. Linguists have observed that the majority of English speakers globally are non-native, and their communication downplays the importance of language competency while emphasising communicative ability. This has ramifications for English instructors and curriculum designers in both home and host nations.

There is strong evidence that students' judgments and choices regarding exchange and degree mobility are rooted in their social networks and are heavily impacted by suggestions from peers who have relevant expertise. Some pupils, however, have greater access to these networks than others. This is why the establishment of new mobile student networks, support groups, and "buddy programmes" should be prioritised by local chapters of international student organisations such as the European Student Union that want to assist mobility.

Ferro (2006) introduces the concept of examining the relocation of highly skilled migrants as part of the whole migration experience or a "migratory project" that involves in-depth analyses of the participants' origins, settings, and motives. While the conclusions are irrelevant to the current study since Ferro's work is unrelated to schooling and takes place among a tightly defined population of highly competent migrants, the framework of migration projects provides a good methodological tool for ISM research. (For further information, see Wells, 2012.)

Contributions to ISM study from various domains grew increasingly significant and useful as fresh sources were included. ISM, for example, is currently being investigated from the perspectives of Education, Sociology, Psychology, Network research, and even Tourism. Because each area has its own ontological and epistemological traditions, the diversity of research methodologies leads to a wide range of discoveries. Analyses and comparisons of these data spark ongoing debate in the scientific community.

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## Outcome of study

The study of student mobility as a subgenre of Migration Studies was particularly prominent, as was the study of mobility as a socially integrated activity. In sociology, ISM was identified as a means of acquiring personal cultural capital. Recent works by Rachel Brooks and Joanne Waters are particularly noteworthy in this regard. Working mostly with UK students, they argue that, with the deflation of university degrees, foreign education has become a differentiating tactic for middle-class British families. This shift is based on the known notion of the formative interaction between individuals and their socio-cultural circumstances, and it proposes utilising Sociology of Higher Education to theorise academic mobility. The theory and the issue are so inextricably linked that even eminent Migration Studies experts are paying greater attention to this social component of student mobility.

In recent years, increased emphasis has been placed on the evaluation of research processes in ISM. In the summer of 2012, an entire issue of *Research in Comparative and International Education* (Volume 7, Number 1, 2012) was devoted to studying the tradition of investigating education abroad from the perspective of comparative education studies. Teichler (Teichler, 2012). Even a brief glance at the titles suggests that the researchers' top goals continue to be the examination of student motives, experiences, and results of educational mobility. The existing issues in ISM research, as well as the new breakthroughs, have consequences for future study. The next natural step in study will most likely attempt to develop relationships between different stages of schooling abroad, determining how they impact one another. Examples include an interdisciplinary evaluation of the current literature, more trustworthy and globally comparable statistics reporting, and exploratory study into the applicants' and their families' decision-making

processes. One of the numerous problems surrounding the ISM topic is how much control HE institutions, state or supranational organisations should have over student mobility. Arguments based on such questions have the potential to improve the area of ISM even more.

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